1989

CENTRAL AMERICAN REFUGEES

Workshop Report

Central American Refugee Research:

Recommendations for Policy

San Jose, Costa Rica

April 7-8, 1989

HMP
Hemispheric Migration Project
Center for Immigration Policy and
Refugee Assistance
Georgetown University

CSUCA
Consejo Superior Universitario
Centroamericano
Secretaría General

NOTE: The opinions expressed here are based on Central American refugee research and practice do not necessarily reflect the views of all the individuals or institutions represented at this meeting.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Hemispheric Migration Project (HMP) of Georgetown University's Center for Immigration Policy and Refugee Assistance (CIPRA) and the General Secretariat of the Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano (CSUCA) sponsored a meeting on April 7-8, 1989, entitled, "Central American Refugee Research: Recommendations for Policy".

The objective of the meeting was to formulate policy recommendations based on recent research on refugees and displaced persons in the region. The gathering also fulfilled the sponsors' promise to promote rigorous studies of the Central American refugee situation--studies that would contribute to the Central American peace plan. Thirty-one participants took part in the meeting, among them researchers from throughout Central America and Mexico who had just completed research under HMP sponsorship on the refugee and displaced populations of Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Similarly, representatives of international organizations and national governments responsible for refugee programs brought to the table years of experience working closely with Central American refugees.

All the participants agreed that the call for peace is first on the agenda for solving this regional crisis.

Three themes were the focus of discussion: spontaneous and voluntary refugee repatriation, the role of national and international agencies in the reintegration of repatriates and internally displaced, and mental health of refugees and displaced persons.

Refugee repatriation, the first conference theme, is generally considered to be the best resolution to a refugee crisis. In Latin America, repatriation occurred recently in Argentina and Uruguay following the return to democracy there; in Central America, thousands of Nicaraguans returned to their country following the Sandinista victory in 1979. In these situations, as in many others around the world, refugees returned home upon the peaceful resolution of a conflict.

Today in Central America the conflicts continue. What is new is that repatriation is occurring in the midst of the conflicts. Though by no means a trend at this point, repatriation is periodically occurring--sometimes in large numbers.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), international protector of refugees, provides information to facilitate voluntary repatriation. UNHCR promotes the establishment of Tripartite Commissions, with participation of the home and host governments, in which the procedures, rights, guarantees, and assistance guidelines for repatriation are set down. It is the UNHCR that oversees the actual repatriation process in collaboration with numerous national, international, and non-governmental organizations.

This brings us to the second theme: What should be the role of international and national agencies in the repatriation and reintegration processes? For repatriates and displaced persons returning home, their successful reintegration into their communities depends on, among other things, receiving protection, regaining their lands or securing employment, breaking down the barriers of suspicion among the population that stayed behind as well as among the authorities, and financial and material assistance in normalizing their lives. This is a tall order. To meet these challenges successfully returnees and those local and international agencies they most trust must be given a large role.

Finally, the third theme under discussion, the mental health of refugees, undocumented, and displaced persons in Central America, is acknowledged to be an inssuficiently problem. The full effects of the persecution, exposure to war, difficult migrations, and losses of homes, land, family and friends on the current lives and future options of the affected populations are largely unknown. Researchers and practitioners discussed the impacts they have documented, and they recommended treatment programs that could be planned to help these Central Americans better cope with the insecurity in their lives.

During two days of discussions, the participants frequently warned against the tendency by some policymakers to generalize about the Central American situation.

That some Salvadoran refugees in Mesa Grande have chosen to repatriate en masse is not to say that the rest of the Salvadoran refugees and undocumented consider this an appropriate moment to return. That the largest numbers of repatriations in the region have taken place among the Miskito in Honduras is not to say that all Miskito are ready to return home, much less the Nicaraguan ladino refugees who continue to leave Nicaragua in large numbers. And, researchers pointed out, no generalizations can be made about the intentions of Guatemalan refugees, even those within the same camps in Mexico.

Though the prospects for refugee repatriation were considered one of the main themes by the meeting organizers, the participants were quick to point out that, in fact, repatriation will not be the solution for most Central Americans found outside their countries and may not even be the most desirable solution to their situation. The civil conflicts have so changed the political and economic landscapes of their home countries that large numbers of refugees, irrespective of their reasons for flight, may not be able to go home nor could they be assimilated if they did. The terrible irony is that most documented and undocumented refugees express a desire to go home, but at the same time see return as unrealistic, at least for now.

The participants were emphatic about one important point. Whether one is speaking of negotiations for refugee repatriation, the planning of assistance programs or the provision of mental health services, the participation of the affected population in decision-making and in program implementation is essential. Without their real participation the prospects for successful implementation of any particular policy or program are doubtful. One also sees assistance programs fail when the interests of the refugees or displaced are not taken into consideration in the planning process.

The advice offered at this meeting and in the research reports by the scholars and international officials is particularly timely as the Central American nations, together with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), prepare the May 1989, forum to discuss a new funding strategy for refugees and displaced in Central America.

It is not the funding level alone that is important in solving the refugee crisis. How those resources are allocated in large part will determine the success of new programs. In fact, one participant warned that if we don't keep this advice in mind, the way we design a program "can be much more dangerous than not providing any assistance at all". Among other things, planners must understand the subtle and the not-so-subtle differences among refugee and displaced populations, recognize the strengths and the limits of each country's capacity to absorb the refugees and returnees, and see that beneficiaries have a voice in the decisions that affect them.

In the following pages you will read statements by Ricardo Stein on repatriation, Beatriz Manz on reintegration, and Armando Campos on refugee mental health. They each presented a draft of their papers at the meeting and their initial arguments have been refined and expanded in this version to reflect the contributions of various participants in the discussions. Following each paper we present a short summary of the major themes raised in discussions of the three topic areas.

The reader will find a bibliography that includes titles of the HMP sponsored studies conducted by the researchers at the meeting, as well as other relevant works on refugees, undocumented and internally displaced persons in Central America.

Finally, and most importantly, at the back you will find the full list of recommendations that emanated from this gathering of experts. Here, we will briefly summarize the most critical recommendations:

- Support Peace Initiatives: seek a just and effective resolution to the political, economic and social crises caused by war, violence and massive population displacement;

- Create Mechanisms for Refugee Participation: give refugees, displaced and repatriates a voice and vote in policies and programs designed to benefit them;

• Legalize the Undocumented: grant legal status, according to international agreements, to Central Americans who are not currently recognized as refugees;

• Promote Civilian Participation in Reintegration: allow civilians to replace the military in the participation and control over the reintegration of repatriates and displaced;

• Allocate Resources Wisely: allocate new international assistance for refugees only to projects that can be maintained over the long-term by local resources so as not to create new dependencies;

• Develop a Coordinated Mental Health Strategy: promote the mental health of refugees and displaced by developing a coordinated strategy of treatment, research, and training.

THE SPONTANEOUS AND PLANNED RETURN OF REPATRIATES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

Ricardo Stein

This paper discusses trends in Central American repatriation with a special focus on the Salvadoran experience. While the author notes that repatriation is a promising development, he observes that the number of refugees who have repatriated to date is somewhere between 1.4% and 2.6% of the total number of refugees estimated for 1987. Stein provides an analysis of the political and institutional challenges that mass repatriation poses for refugees, affected governments, international agencies and Central American civil society.

Introduction

This work presents a series of reflections on the recent repatriations in Central America, particularly the Salvadoran experience of collective and organized repatriation from Honduras. An initial version was presented during the second CIPRA/CSUCA meeting on Central American refugees and displaced persons which took place in San Jose, Costa Rica on April 7-8, 1989.

During discussions of various topics at the meeting, the Salvadoran experience was contrasted with that of Nicaraguan and Guatemalan repatriations. The problem of unrecognized refugees, particularly in Mexico and Costa Rica, was examined, including their possible willingness to return and the difficulties they face. This work has been enriched by these discussions.

These reflections are presented in four sections. The first section addresses the issue of whether a tendency toward mass repatriation can be perceived in the region. The second section seeks to identify those factors or conditions which intercede or interfere in the

decision to repatriate individually or collectively, and whether specific actions by governments or national or international agencies actually serve as incentives. The third section explores the implications of the decision to repatriate en masse for the various actors involved in repatriation. Finally, some of the political difficulties presented by repatriations are discussed.

Trends

During 1987 and 1988, close to 25,000 Central Americans recrossed borders to return to their countries of origin (Table 1). Taking into account the difficulties in quantifying the refugee and displaced population, those who returned represent approximately 21.5% of refugees assisted by the UNHCR in the region at the beginning of 1987 (Table 2), but barely accounts for between 1.4 to 2.6% of the total estimated refugee population by the end of that year (Table 3).

The above figures do not include those undocumented persons or unregistered refugees who may have repatriated spontaneously, without the assistance or cooperation of any agency, and who consequently are not reflected in the statistics. Nevertheless, their number appears to be small, and to date they do not seem to have repatriated in groups large enough to have been noticeable. Recent studies of undocumented Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Mexico City, as well as Nicaraguans in Costa Rican territory, confirm this appraisal. The only case contrary to the above mentioned experiences is that of the Nicaraguan Miskito Indians in Honduran territory.[1]

Although mass repatriations occur with some frequency, it would be premature to assert that we are facing a growing tendency to move from individual or family group repatriation toward mass repatriation, and even less toward collective and organized repatriation.[2] To illustrate, during 1985 and 1986, the number of Salvadoran repatriates per month exceeded 100 only 16 times (out of 48 possibilities). It is also worth noting that since the first mass, collective and organized repatriation in October 1987, only once has the number of repatriates per month exceeded 100 (with the obvious exception of August and November 1988, months in which collective and organized repatriations again took place). This also seems to be the case with Nicaraguans in general, although not with the Miskito Indians in the Honduran border areas.[3]

Mass repatriations seem to be a phenomenon almost exclusive to asylum countries adjacent to the countries of origin and occur in a North-South direction (Table 1). That is to say, there are mass repatriations of Guatemalans from Mexico to Guatemala, of Salvadorans from Honduras to El Salvador, and of Nicaraguans from Honduras to Nicaragua. There have been repatriations of Salvadorans from Nicaragua, but in very small groups. Since the passage of the Simpson-Rodino bill, a number of Salvadorans have been deported en masse from the United States.[4] This mass return from non-contiguous countries could be the exception to the rule regarding mass repatriations from adjacent countries, and could begin to occur with other Central American nationals.

It would also be premature to assert that there is a tendency toward repatriation. It must be emphasized that the majority of refugees in the region are undocumented in the country of asylum. The bulk of recent research involving registered refugees or undocumented Guatemalans, Salvadorans and Nicaraguans in these asylum countries points out that a significant number manifest a strong desire to return, but feel that such a return is nearly impossible as long as requisite conditions are not met, nor are likely to be, in the foreseeable future.

It is important to introduce some nuances into this discussion. For example, research shows that Salvadorans have adjusted to life in Mexico better than Guatemalans. While the former are of urban or semi-urban origin, the latter tend to be of peasant origin with a strong ethnic identification and strong ties to the land. The Salvadorans express a desire to return but feel that the conditions do not yet exist. For this reason they are willing to accept relocation to third countries. The Guatemalans share the desire to return. Nevertheless, faced with the lack of conditions, they prefer to wait.[5]

Additionally, the data do not suggest that migratory flows have stabilized. Reports continue of massive outflows of Nicaraguans and Salvadorans toward Guatemala, probably headed for Mexico and eventually the United States. At the same time, various agencies have reported an increasing flow of Hondurans also headed for Guatemala. The causes may have changed since the beginning of the decade, but not the direction of migratory flows.[6]

Conditions and Factors which Influence the Decision to Repatriate

It is difficult to define those factors or conditions which exert most influence in the decision to repatriate or in the determination to repatriate individually or collectively. It is clear that the level of conflict which persists in the country of origin is not the determining factor. Thus, Guatemala, the country which reports the lowest level of visible conflict in the region, also reports the lowest number of repatriations. El Salvador, with the highest level of apparent conflict, is the only country in which collective and organized repatriations carried out by the refugees themselves have occurred.

In the case of El Salvador, the first information available on mass repatriation dates from November 1981. The repatriates who returned collectively although not in an organized way were precisely those refugees who preferred a return to El Salvador to relocation from San Jose Guarita, in Lempira Province to Mesa Grande in San Marcos, Ocotepeque Province.[7] Since that time, there have been several waves of repatriation from different locations: from Buenos Aires (refugee) camp in 1983 and 1984, and from Mesa Grande in 1987 and 1988. Contrasting with this mobility is the almost total immobility of refugees in the camp of Colomoncagua.

In the case of Salvadoran refugees in Mesa Grande, we find lack of trust in the outside world and in official entities. This distrust, coupled with the positive experience of camp life--in the sense that the collective has been capable of resolving problems and defending its interests--are likely factors that have most influenced an individual or family to repatriate with a group, even with the knowledge that a mass repatriation means returning in a confrontational manner. This is particularly true in the case of women heads of household with children.

This perception is validated, in part, by the constant news received in the camps about violent actions against those who reside in areas to be repatriated, or indeed, the specific cases of an individually repatriated family having been the object of some misfortune or violence. Refugees in Mesa Grande, the leadership of organizations representing refugees and repatriates, as well as officials of international agencies and local nongovernmental organizations, concur that individual

repatriation is tantamount to converting a refugee to an internally displaced person, thereby losing the few advantages refugee status can provide.[8] Nevertheless, close to 50% of the repatriations reported from Mesa Grande continue to be individual.

The different relocation experiences of the internally displaced (repoblaciones), as well as previous repatriations have had a demonstration effect and appear to have contributed in general to the decision of other refugees to repatriate. The relocations of internally displaced persons, especially those organized by the displaced themselves with the support of local and international agencies, have served to "test the waters," experiment with certain instruments or mechanisms which would provide some degree of security, and determine the degree of openness. The refugee organizations in Mesa Grande meticulously studied the different cases of internal relocation, and after each mass repatriation there have been meetings to discern the lessons in each case.[9]

These experiences with relocation and repatriation enabled the international agencies which support local development agencies or work directly with the refugees, to estimate costs, examine and test logistical difficulties, and perceive political difficulties which would have to be dealt with.

The process of vacating the camps also seems to have played an important role in the dynamic of repatriation. In the aftermath of the different mass repatriations from Mesa Grande, the remaining refugee population has reported greater levels of insecurity with respect to their own stay in the refugee camps, and has more emphatically expressed a desire to return. Here, the agencies have the crucial task of supporting those who remain and restoring the normalcy of camp life.

The distrust of the outside world and of official entities is shared by both Nicaraguan Miskito Indians and indigenous Guatemalan refugees in Mexico. In the case of the Miskitos, it is a question of "distrust of anyone who is not a Miskito." In the case of the Guatemalans, it is distrust towards those whom the displaced and refugee populations consider responsible for the geographic, social and economic reorganization of their world.[10]

In this sense, the existence of plans, policies and/or programs to assist repatriates does not appear to

influence the decision to repatriate, or to do so individually or en masse. On the contrary, anything associated with the official either seems to generate, a priori, high levels of distrust, or in contrast, exists without the knowledge of the majority of refugees.[11] In the case of El Salvador, there are no plans or programs by the government, international and intergovernmental agencies, or local non-governmental organizations for those who repatriate individually. In this sense, the impression is reinforced that the refugee who repatriates individually becomes part of the multitude of internally displaced, unless taken in by relatives.

Thus, return is based far less on the existence of plans and programs, or the availability of resources, than on certainty that agencies and organizations trusted by the refugees are willing to support and accompany them in the return and settlement. It is this latter set of factors which lends a certain amount of encouragement to a decision already made, at least for those who have decided to repatriate collectively and in an organized way. This also explains, in part, the differences in reception that certain agencies receive in different countries.

In the Salvadoran experience, for example, there is a profound distrust on the part of the refugee population toward those plans in which they have not participated, or which are implemented by agencies and institutions they do not trust. These are seen as part of counter-insurgency plans which are an affront to their fundamental rights. As an example, UNHCR/El Salvador has had considerable difficulty collecting the information needed to prepare the national documents for the Guatemala Conference. Agencies, as well as communities of repatriates, have systematically refused to provide information about the affected population or even small projects.

In the case of Nicaraguan Miskito Indians, on the other hand, the UNHCR appears to be the most trusted institution, and the one which can move with the greatest ease in the repatriated communities.

The counterpart of the above set of concerns is the influence that the reception policy in the country of asylum can exert over the decision to repatriate. Salvadoran refugees in Mesa Grande explicitly stated that pressures from the Honduran government were a determining factor in their decision to repatriate. Colomoncagua, on

the other hand, which has been subjected to at least the same level of hostility as the Mesa Grande camp, has found in these pressures reason, or at least justification, for its resistance to relocation or repatriation.[12]

Implications of Repatriation for the Different Actors

The repatriation process contains at least two clearly differentiated stages with different implications for the various actors involved: the physical move and reintegration.[13] In the case of El Salvador, the principal actors view the process, in both stages, as part of the political and military conflict, independently of the discourse with which they portray their position or participation.

The aforementioned distrust on the part of the refugees is not one-sided. There is a mutual and intense distrust between the repatriates and the various institutions representing the Salvadoran government. For this reason the move itself becomes an intense process of negotiation which is even more difficult due to the lack of mediators trusted by both sides.

For the Honduran government and armed forces, the Salvadoran refugees represent a "threat to their national security."[14] Hence, the policy of maintaining Salvadoran refugees concentrated and seeking ways to promote their return as rapidly as possible--a policy which contrasts sharply with the treatment of Nicaraguan refugees.[15] Paradoxically, the Honduran government's attitude has facilitated mass repatriations, when the decision to repatriate has already been made, even when it open conflicts with the wishes of the Salvadoran civil and military authorities.

The repatriates identify themselves as a civilian population, not aligned with either side of the conflict, although there is clearly a high level of distrust and rejection of the government and armed forces. This distrust and rejection are primarily due to the circumstances and experiences suffered during the flight from El Salvador, the constant harassment the refugees have been subjected to in Honduran territory and in the refugee camps, and the human rights violations suffered by a considerable number of repatriates and inhabitants of areas adjacent to the settlements.

For the Salvadoran government and armed forces, the repatriates are the social base of the guerrillas. Moreover, it is believed that repatriations correspond to a new FMLN strategy to recover territorial control over zones with strategic military importance, to obtain logistical support, protective cover and intelligence networks. Hence, the Army's policy is to maximize control over the refugees, a policy which is characterized by hindering or blocking access to foodstuffs and other basic necessities, constant military operations in the resettled communities, controls over access to the communities, etc.

In this context, the most positive aspects which could facilitate repatriation and increase the possibility of success are taken by each side as evidence to confirm its worst suspicions. The civil and military authorities view the repatriations as a form of support for the guerrillas. From this viewpoint, the refugees have been "worked on" and "manipulated" by the FMLN in order to assume this role. As evidence of this support and manipulation they cite the high levels of organization with which the move is carried out and which operates in the settlements. The fact that the repatriations are to highly conflictive zones also serves as evidence that the settlements function as the rearguards or supply stations of the guerrillas, and that the NGOs involved in repatriation also play a logistical support role.

For their part, the repatriates view the delays in the documentation process as evidence that they are being kept undocumented in order to impede their mobility. At the same time, they consider the information solicited for the immigration and personal identification processes to be information which will be used as military intelligence or to facilitate new attacks against them. Consequently, they refuse to provide information, which delays the documentation process and confirms their worst suspicions. In fact, and in general terms, they believe that repatriation takes place against the wishes of the government and as an exclusive result of the refugees' struggle.

In the framework of this extremely polarized situation, the UNHCR is seen by the refugees as an ally of the Salvadoran government, the armed forces and the United States Embassy. In spite of the fact that the UNHCR portrays repatriation as an eminently humanitarian process, its participation is based in fact on eminently

political agreements with the government. From the perspective of the refugees, the nongovernmental agencies and the churches working with the refugee and repatriated populations, this fact biases the UNHCR's participation in favor of the government, to the disadvantage of the refugees.

In situations of unresolved conflict, there is an obvious political contradiction in the legal norm which establishes that a repatriate should immediately receive the protection of the government in the country of origin. If a refugee feels pressure to abandon the country of asylum without the confidence, from his perspective, that the institution charged with protecting his security and his rights does so, and at the same time, the officials of the UNHCR state that they have no mandate to protect a refugee after repatriation and that he must be protected by the government, it is no wonder that the UNHCR does not enjoy a good reputation among the Salvadoran refugee and repatriated population.

It is precisely because the refugees do not trust the UNHCR to provide protection and guarantees, that they seek the presence of other agencies and nongovernmental institutions. Nevertheless, the Salvadoran armed forces considers the UNHCR to be a source of pressure which on many occasions has led to actions contrary to national interests.

Political Aspects

Although it is premature to speak of a tendency toward mass repatriation, there seems to be a tendency toward the organization of the refugee population in asylum countries, and with this organization, the creation of representative intermediary entities. Such is the case with the recently formed Permanent Commissions of Guatemalan refugees in Mexico.[16] This indicates that in the future, refugees will demand greater participation in all aspects of their return; they will approach repatriation as a way of reclaiming their rights (reivindicación), the creation of conditions for repatriation as a struggle for their rights, and they will demand greater levels of control over the process of repatriation.

These levels of awareness, reached through organization and perhaps through the effectiveness of the organizing process, lead to accusations of "political manipulation" of repatriations. Salvadoran refugees see

repatriation as a form of redress and approach the process of repatriation as a struggle to reclaim their rights.

The displaced and refugee organizations (Comité Nacional de Repobladores, CRN; Comité Cristiano Prodesplazados de El Salvador, CRIPDES) are quite advanced in their political coordination of the platform for reclaiming their rights, and at the same time, are the overseers of the repatriation process. This supervision has taken place with certain levels of contradiction between refugees and their representative organizations. For example, during the third repatriation of refugees from Mesa Grande to Santa Marta, the community council directly responsible for the repatriation was strongly criticized by the CNR for not having fought more adamantly to stop in San Salvador en route to the settlement, and for not having insisted on being permitted a meeting between those returning and those who were waiting to receive them.

Nevertheless, the refugees who have opted for return en masse consciously support the process and the means. Some do so with clarity as to the political objectives sought. Others are motivated by the desire to return and the importance placed upon not breaking up the group/community of which they form an active and integral part.

It is worthwhile mentioning a few thoughts regarding the agencies. Since the outbreak of the crisis, the region has seen a proliferation of intergovernmental agencies, international development agencies, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Close to 100 agencies contribute approximately US$200 million annually in assistance and development programs for Central America, together with a growing network of more than 600 local NGOs.[17] The presence of these agencies is so important that the specific way in which they provide assistance has at times been manipulated to form part of the tactical arsenal of the counter-insurgency.

At the same time, the principal aid packages to the region, PEC, ICCARO, CEE--[18] identify the NGOs as fundamental and irreplaceable institutional agents for the implementation of certain types of projects and programs, particularly those which require a high level of participation from the beneficiary population. This

is especially true of work with refugees, displaced persons and repatriates.

The Mexican and Central American NGOs most committed to serving and accompanying the refugee population have the added problem that a good part of their financing comes from foreign countries, a situation that in some instances leads to attempts on the part of the financing agency to influence the program criteria of the NGOs. Thus, the agencies feel pressure to avoid political manipulation from the government, the international agencies, or the refugees themselves.

Some Final Reflections

Setting aside for a moment the fact that there have been important changes in the countries that have undergone armed conflicts in the region, and that these conflicts, indeed, have been the principal reason for the population outflows, in this author's opinion, the repatriations which have occurred seem to be a response more to pressures exerted by the governments of the countries of asylum more than to changes in the country of origin.

In such a polarized and complex situation, the voluntary nature of return may be placed in jeopardy. Conditions may be manipulated by governments, the UNHCR, or even the refugees themselves in such a way as to promote only individual repatriations. Both intergovernmental agencies and non-governmental organizations have a fundamental role to play in assuring that these situations do not occur and in calling them to the attention of the international community when they do.

Resources--human and financial--as well as the attention paid to the repatriations themselves seem to be the natural corollary of the pressure referred to earlier. Without minimizing at all the profound needs which this group might have, the funds dedicated to repatriations greatly exceed their magnitude, particularly when compared with the magnitude of the problem represented by at least two other easily identifiable groups numerically superior to the repatriates: unregistered refugees who do not plan to return, and those who never left their country and who are in situations similar to those who sought refuge or have returned. It is necessary to seriously consider programs for the undocumented who do not plan to return

as well as ways of assisting those who return individually. At the same time, greater care must be taken that those who never left the country and are currently overlooked are consciously integrated into programs.

The most important reflection, however, is that it is impossible to generalize with respect to Central American refugees. Each country and ethnic group presents characteristics which are not only distinguishing, but also mean that the combination of actors and factors which intercede in both the phenomenon and process of displacement/repopulation will differ.

TABLE 1

REPATRIATIONS IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO
COMPARATIVE STATISTICS, 1986-1988

ASYLUM COUNTRY	YEAR[a]	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN			
		Nicaragua	El Salvador	Guatemala	Total
Costa Rica	1986				
	1987	176	79	1	256
	1988	236	65		303
El Salvador	1986				
	1987	9			9
	1988	54			54
Guatemala	1986				
	1987				
	1988	8			8
Honduras	1986		963[b]		
	1987	3,873	5,597	139	9,607
	1988	8,226	2,476	7	10,709
Mexico	1986			257[c]	
	1987	3	3	847	835
	1988		15	1,921	1,936
Nicaragua	1986				
	1987		149	35	184
	1988		665	8	673
Panama	1986				
	1987	4	22		26
	1988		1		1
Totals	1986				
	1987	4,065	5,848	1,022	10,935
	1988	8,526	3,222	1,936	13,684

Notes: aThe data for 1987 and 1988 was provided by UNHCR/El Salvador
bData provided by UNHCR/Honduras
cManz, B. Repatriation and Reintegration: An Arduous Process in in Guatemala.(Washington, D.C.: HMP/CIPRA, Georgetown University 1988), Appendix.

Table 2

CENTRAL AMERICA:
REFUGEES ASSISTED BY THE UNHCR

COUNTRIES OF ASYLUM	NATIONALITY OF REFUGEES		
	Salvadoran	Guatemalan	Nicaraguan
Belize	2,135	877	---
Costa Rica	3,333	---	15,219
El Salvador	---	---	324
Guatemala	267	---	410
Honduras	20,693	478	25,070
Mexico	3,570	40,983	115
Nicaragua	1,457	5	---
Panama	824	---	248

The majority of these figures were provided by the governments and were based on their own information and methods. Figures up through May 31, 1987.

Source: Revista Repatriados, August 1987.

TABLE 3

REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS IN AND FROM CENTRAL AMERICA: A STATISTICAL PROFILE

	SALVADORANS	GUATEMALANS	NICARAGUANS	TOTALS
U.S.	500,000 to 850,000(a)	100,000 to 200,000(a)	40,000 to 80,000(a)	640,000 to 1,130,000
MEXICO	120,000(b) to 250,000(c)	45,000(b) to 150,000(c)	N/A	165,000 to 400,000
COSTA RICA	6,200(b)	200(b)	22,000 to 100,000	28,400 to 106,400
HONDURAS	24,000(b)	1,000(b)	43,000(b)	68,000
GUATEMALA	10,000(b)	--	2,000(b) to 20,000(d)	12,000 to 30,000
BELIZE	3,000(b)	6,000(b)	N/A	9,000
NICARAGUA	7,600(b)	500(b)	--	8,100
CANADA	5,317(e)	1,189(e)	N/A	6,506
PANAMA	900(b)	N/A	300(b)	1,200
EL SALVADOR	--	N/A	400(b)	400
INTERNAL DISPLACED(f)	500,000(g)	100,000 to 250,000(h)	250,000(i)	850,000 to 1,000,000
TOTAL	1,177,017 to 1,657,017	253,889 to 608,889	357,700 to 493,700	1,788,606 to 2,759,606
POP.(j)	4,768,000	7,963,000	3,272,000	16,003,000
% DISPLACED IN POPULA.	25 to 29%	3.10 to 7.5%	11 to 15%	11.6 to 18%

SOURCES FOR TABLE:

(a) Patricia Ruggles and Michael Fix, Impact and Potential Impacts of Central America Migrants on HHS and Related Programs of Assistance, (Washington D.C.: The Urban Institute, Department of Health and Human Services, 1985).

(b) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Number of Refugees as of 31 March 1987," Geneva, 1987. We have not deducted the 4,300 Salvadorans that repatriated voluntarily to their places of origin in October, 1987.

(c) Mexican Voluntary Agencies. In International Council for Voluntary Agencies. "Consultation." (Geneva: 1986).

(d) Government of Guatemala Estimates, 1987.

(e) Government of Canada data. Embassy of Canada in Mexico, 1987.

(f) Not shown on the table are 35,000 internally displaced Hondurans.

(g) Government of El Salvador data and Voluntary Agencies estimates. In Universidad Centroamericana Jose Simeon Cañas. Desplazados y Refugiados. Version Preliminar. (San Salvador: UCA, 1985).

(h) Government of Guatemala estimates quoted in "Consultation," op. cit., 1986.

(i) Social Security Institute and Cepad quoted in "Consultation," op. cit., 1986.

(j) The figures are for 1985. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean. 1986 Edition, New York, ECLA, June, 1987), p. 205.

Source: Aguayo, Sergio and Weiss Fagen, Patricia. Central Americans in Mexico and the United States. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center for Immigration Policy and Refugee Assistance, 1988)

APPENDIX I

SALVADORAN POPULATION REPATRIATING VOLUNTARILY
FROM REFUGEE CAMPS IN HONDURAS ASSISTED BY THE UNHCR
(By camp and year)
1984-1988

Camps	1984(a)	1985(a)	1986(a)	1987	1988	TOTAL	%
Mesa Grande	1,347	541	807	5,338	2,202	10,235	85.2
Colomoncagua	264	---	33	27	147	471	3.9
San Antonio	54	61	104	205	105	549	4.6
Buenos Aires	481	205	19	25	23	753	6.3
Total	2,146	827	963	5,595	2,477	12,003	100

Source: UNHCR

Notes: (a) Data from UNHCR/Tegucigalpa through December of each year
(b) Data from UNHCR/San Salvador from December 1986 through December of 1988

APPENDIX II

VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION OF SALVADORAN REFUGEES
FROM HONDURAN CAMPS ASSISTED BY THE UNHCR
(Monthly figures during 1988)

Camps	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL	%
Mesa Grande	36	33	25	51	27	12	18	1,159a	6	42	743b	50	2,202	88.66
Colomoncagua	5	2	6	19	3	19	55	14	4	12	8	0	147	6.01
San Antonio	0	0	30	13	31	2	2	5	7	15	0	0	105	4.33
Buenos Aires	2	13	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	1.00
TOTAL	43	48	61	91	61	33	75	1,178	17	69	751	50	2,477	100.0

Source: Official data from the UNHCR up through December 1988
Notes: a Second collective repatriation organized by the refugees
b Third collective repatriation

NOTES

1. The data regarding Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Mexico was provided by Laura O'Dogherty and Cristina Bottinelli. Mirna Mack confirms the tendencies of unregistered Guatemalan refugees in the areas of Chiapas and Quintana Roo. Data regarding Nicaraguans in Costa Rica was provided by Gilda Pacheco, Mario Ramirez and the staff of DIGEPARE. Figures on the Miskito Indians in Honduras came from Marvin Ortega.

2. The Salvadoran experience suggests that it is necessary to begin to distinguish between, on the one hand, individual or family group repatriations and those of large groups (100 people or more) generally organized by the UNHCR or other non-governmental agencies at their request, and on the other hand, collective repatriations organized by the repatriates themselves, supported by the UNHCR and various non-governmental organizations. For the purposes of this paper, we consider mass repatriation as those involving more than 100 individuals.

3. Based on the conclusions of Marvin Ortega resulting from his research on the repatriations of Miskito Indians from Honduran territory to the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua.

4. As of mid-August, 1987, the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM) reported having assisted 10,990 deportees from the United States since opening operations in El Salvador. At no time does ICM mention mass deportations in spite of the fact that the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has reported mass detentions of illegal aliens and undocumented attempting to penetrate its territory. In April 1989, at least 250 Salvadorans were deported from the United States. The INS contracted the services of an airline to return them to El Salvador in two groups. It is the first public case of a mass deportation.

5. "Familias Guatemaltecas y Salvadoreñas en la Ciudad de Mexico: Su Proceso de Migración-Refugio y las Alternativas a Futuro." Research by Cristina Bottinelli at the Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios de la Familia, at the invitation of CSUCA and sponsored by CIPRA.

6. Again, the case of Nicaraguan Miskitos is the exception. The permeability of the border and natural movement corresponding to production cycles seem to have been reestablished, although it is premature to state that population movement has stabilized.

7. Camarda, Renato. "Traslado Forzoso: Refugiados Salvadoreños en Honduras." Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Centro de Documentación de Honduras (CEDOH) 1987, p. 18.

8. Interviews carried out during the course of the study, Repatriaciones en Situaciones de Conflicto No-Resuelto: El Caso de El Salvador; coordinated by the author and sponsored by CIPRA.

9. The study of different cases of repatriation within various national contexts has ceased to be a prerogative of agencies and research centers. The refugees themselves seem the most interested in researching the experiences of others who have shared similar situations. Reports from Mexico indicate a growing interest on the part of Guatemalan refugees to learn about the experiences of the Salvadorans.

10. The impression and expressions of distrust on the part of Miskito Indians and Guatemalans were suggested by Marvin Ortega and Mirna Mack, respectively, as a result of research they are conducting with these refugee populations.

11. According to Marvin Ortega, the majority of Miskito Indian refugees in Honduras are not aware of the Law of Autonomy. At best, Miskito leaders knew of it while the population at large did not. However in the view of at least one official of an international refugee assistance organization, the law of Autonomy was a powerful incentive for repatriation.

12. Segundo Montes suggests an examination of the organization of the refugees and their ideology as important factors in determining the response of countries of asylum to the refugees. The more organized and antagonistic the refugees' ideology toward the country of asylum, the more hostility will be shown by that country toward the refugees, and pressures for their relocation to third countries or their repatriation will be greater.

13. By "move," we understand the physical act of transfer from the refugee camp in the country of asylum to the community which the repatriates will live in the country of origin. Included in this move are all of the required immigration procedures. The reintegration is the process which begins at the moment of return and remains open in time.

14. Based on an interview with Colonel Abraham Turcios, Director of the National Refugee Commission of Honduras (CONARE).

15. Marvin Ortega suggests that a distinction should be made between "mobility" and "mobilization." In this sense, the Nicaraguan Miskitos in Honduras have enjoyed little labor mobility, although they have been strongly mobilized for anti-Sandinista military reasons. Even accepting this distinction, there has been a much more restrictive and hostile policy toward Salvadorans than toward Nicaraguans in general.

16. Once again the case of Nicaraguan Miskitos stands out as the exception. According to Marvin Ortega, the pivotal points of organization are the old institutions and power structures, especially the Moravian Church.

17. See Holt-Gimenez, Eric.

18. PEC: United Nations Special Plan for Economic Cooperation with Central America (Spanish Acronym); ICCARD: International Commission for Central American Recovery and Development; EEC: European Economic Community.